

with close family and friends, and it is a comfort to know that they are well cared for in my absence. My mom has always been a special source of comfort in difficult times. I speak with her often and just today received a box of her homemade cookies.

"Thanks for taking the time to offer your support. I believe our task here is a difficult one. I hope we will stay the course."

To this young man, I say, we will.

#### ARE YOU BETTER OFF?

(Ms. SCHAKOWSKY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Yes, it was a famous American who once asked, "Are you better off today than you were 4 years ago?" To most Americans, the answer is "no." That is not just me saying it. A Gallup poll found that 62 percent of Americans are dissatisfied with the way things are going here at home.

There is a reason why a majority of Americans believe that our country is headed in the wrong direction under the leadership of President Bush. Median income has dropped 3.3 percent since President Bush was elected.

Two million Americans have lost their jobs since President Bush got his.

Three-and-a-half million people have moved onto the poverty rolls since President Bush moved into the White House.

Four million more people are uninsured since President Bush was sworn in.

Our constituents are being gouged at the gas pump while President Bush fills his campaign coffers with checks from big oil and big gas.

Consumer confidence, which was at 115.7 in January 2001, was at 92.9 last month.

College tuition, up 14 percent in 1 year.

We are not better off.

#### ARE YOU BETTER OFF?

(Mr. NUSSLE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. NUSSLE. It is hard to believe that the Democrats are coming to the floor today and trying to spread fear and make sure that people feel that they are not better off. They ask the question, Are you better off than 4 years ago? They hope you are not. Republicans not only hope you are, but will work to make sure you are.

The Democrats have no plan to balance the budget. All they offer from their nominee is higher taxes and bigger government. The seniors, for the first time since the Medicare plan was put into place in 1965, have choices as a result of a Republican Congress and President Bush.

Students have received two times the increase of education funding since Re-

publicans took office, three times for special education alone.

We have more workers working in this country than at any time in American history.

We had the strongest growth in the last 6 months. In the last 20 years we have not seen this kind of growth.

Interest rates are at the lowest ever.

The other side has stopped an energy plan going on now 6 years, and now they stand at the gas pump and wring their hands and wonder why gas prices are as high as they are.

Democrats hope you are not better off. Republicans will work to make sure you are better off.

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#### THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S RECORD

(Mr. MEEKS of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MEEKS of New York. Mr. Speaker, a description of the Bush administration record of the last 3¼ years is something like this:

Not fully funding No Child Left Behind, unintelligent. Not providing a real benefit to seniors for prescription drug purposes, shameful. Not putting forth a real solution to significantly decrease the 44 million uninsured, bad medicine. Weapons of mass destruction, a lie. No-bid contracts for the Vice President's former company Halliburton, scandalous. Revealing the name of a covert CIA operative, traitorous. The Abu Ghraib fiasco, passing the buck. The management of the Iraq War, bumbling. The promise of no nation-building, forgotten. Being a uniter as opposed to a divider, hilarious.

The promise of a less arrogant foreign policy, you have got to be kidding me.

#### H.R. 3722, THE UNDOCUMENTED ALIEN EMERGENCY MEDICAL ASSISTANCE AMENDMENTS OF 2004

(Mr. DREIER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, Congress has consistently approved the eligibility of undocumented immigrants to receive emergency services, and I firmly believe that providing emergency health care is not inconsistent with curbing illegal immigration, which continues to be a high priority for me and others here.

H.R. 3722, which we discussed yesterday and will be voting on today, would require hospitals to gather information on patients in emergency care situations, including a biometric indicator to be retained in hospital records for a minimum of 5 years. This data would be transmitted to the Department of Homeland Security to initiate the removal proceedings for undocumented immigrants.

Hospitals oppose H.R. 3722 because it will, in fact, compromise public safety. The American Hospital Association states: "H.R. 3722 could pose a significant public health threat for entire communities because the fear of deportation would inevitably preclude undocumented immigrants from seeking care for communicable diseases until these individuals are extremely ill."

Mr. Speaker, we need to do everything we can to ensure that we do not pass H.R. 3722.

#### THE STATE OF THE U.S. ECONOMY

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak about the declining state of the economy. When President Bush took office, we had a \$236 billion budget surplus and the Nation had created 22 million jobs in the previous 8 years. The country was experiencing the biggest drop in child poverty in a generation and the lowest poverty rate in 20 years.

Today, 8.2 million Americans are looking for work and the unemployment rate is 30 percent higher. 2.2 million private sector jobs and 2.7 million manufacturing jobs have been lost. Household income has decreased by almost \$1,500 per family. The number of the uninsured has increased by 3.8 million. College tuition is up 28 percent.

As busy as we are and as important as the effort on foreign policy is, I hope this administration would dedicate some of its time to economic security as well. The American people have suffered much from terrorism. They do not need to suffer any more from President Bush's faltering and failed economic policies.

#### HONORING SISTER JEANNE O'LAUGHLIN

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, Sister Jeanne O'Laughlin is a name synonymous with compassion, love, and energy.

As the President of Barry University for the past 23 years in my hometown of Miami, Sister Jeanne has brought hope not only to our South Florida community but also to the international community. Sister Jeanne is known and loved by all of our South Florida residents. She is a dynamic and energetic champion for education and has worked tirelessly to ensure that Barry University far exceeded its goals. She has dedicated her entire life to education and to the improvement of the human condition. Sister Jeanne's concern for others and her willingness to fight for justice makes her an irreplaceable part of our South Florida family.

We have been blessed to have Sister Jeanne in our community. We love her,

we thank her, and we wish her much success and happiness in all of her future endeavors.

#### ARE WE BETTER OFF NOW?

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I often ask the question, Are we better off than we were? And I think that that question needs to be posed today and for the next few months with regard to the Bush administration and the Republican majority here in the Congress.

If we think about 4 years ago, we were in a surplus situation. Now we have a huge deficit. If we think about 4 years ago, we were basically at peace. Now in the midst of a war, a war which I think most people realize was essentially fought for the wrong reasons and which is costing us a tremendous amount of resources as well as costing us lives and wounded soldiers. And if we also think about 4 years ago, the economy was doing very well. Jobs were being created. Four years later under the Bush administration and the Republican majority, we have a situation where something like 2.5 million jobs have been lost and many Americans are having a hard time making ends meet.

So when the Republicans say to us, or anybody says to us, Are we better off than we were 4 years ago under this administration, the answer is clearly, no.

#### REPORT ILLEGAL ALIENS

(Mr. SMITH of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, last year illegal aliens cost taxpayers more than \$1 billion in hospital costs.

I support H.R. 3722, introduced by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHR-ABACHER), which requires hospitals to report the immigration status of the individuals they treat. This bill also makes employers responsible for these medical costs if they employ the illegal alien.

Hospitals already collect information from patients. Reporting immigration status as a condition for receiving Federal funds is not overly burdensome.

We cannot afford to ignore the growing costs associated with illegal immigration. In my home State of Texas, health care for illegal immigrants costs taxpayers at least \$170 million every year.

If we are serious about reducing illegal immigration, we need to support this legislation.

#### QUESTIONING THE HOUSE SCHEDULE

(Mr. EMANUEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, this is, since April 1, the 16th day the House has been in session. And here is a sample of what we have done: we have named 11 post offices, recognized the Garden Club of America, recognized the importance of music education in America, and authorized the use of the Capitol grounds for the Soap Box Derby.

What has happened to our troops in Iraq in that time? We lost 184 Americans, our loved ones, bringing the total to 785. As we name post offices, our constituents are asking questions of the whys and hows of Iraq and want us to get the answers.

This week how are we handling the controversies in Iraq? We are going to name three more post offices; authorize the use of the Capitol grounds, appropriately, for the World War II memorial services; and consider the Paperwork Reduction Act. Then we are going on recess.

This House has surrendered its oversight role, which is constitutionally enacted and guaranteed, by rubber-stamping the policy in Iraq without asking the questions our constituents are asking and not seeking the answers they need.

As President Kennedy once said, "To govern is to choose." We need to make choices here.

#### WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION IN IRAQ

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, for months we have heard opponents of the war in Iraq come to the floor of this Congress and ask the question again and again, where are the weapons of mass destruction?

And yesterday the answer came in part, and the silence on the left is deafening. Yesterday the Coalition Provisional Authority announced the discovery of two separate Iraqi munitions wired by terrorists to serve as IEDs in Baghdad which date to the regime of Saddam Hussein and contain weapons of mass destruction, sarin and mustard gas.

Where are the weapons of mass destruction? Mr. Speaker, the answer is becoming more clear by the hour. The weapons of mass destruction are where they have always been, hidden in Baghdad, within the reach of terrorists, a threat to U.S. troops, the region, and the wider world, and more than enough justification for our deeds and the courage of our troops in that region.

#### THE BUDGET DEFICIT AND THE NEXT ELECTION

(Mr. McDERMOTT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, my remarks are 1 minute long. During this

minute, the economic policies put into place by the President and Republican leaders will force America to spend almost \$1 million more than it takes in. That is right. We are free-spending \$1 million a minute we do not have.

This President has created the worst budget deficit in history and the worst economic climate since the Depression. The administration keeps rewarding its friends with seven-figure incomes. They are doing it by mortgaging America's future.

There is a payment coming due this November, and America has saved up. It is called an election. Soon a new President and Democratic leadership will restore fiscal sanity to this house of cards. It is not soon enough to send George Bush back to Crawford, Texas.

#### IN SUPPORT OF MAJOR MEDICAL LIABILITY REFORM

(Mr. BURGESS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, this week is a good week. The American College of Surgeons is in town visiting us in our offices on Capitol Hill, and so it is of some note that we passed again a measure for liability reform last week in this House. We did that a year ago and unfortunately got stalled over somewhere by the rotunda. I hope this year it can indeed go forward because, Mr. Speaker, it is so important for people to realize and for my friends at the American College of Surgeons to realize that right now we have got a President who will sign major medical liability reform. We have a candidate running for that office who has either voted "no" or been absent when that vote has been taken in the other body.

We can no longer afford the crippling costs of defensive medicine that are layered upon our existing health care system. Mr. Speaker, it is time for Americans to sit up and take notice of this problem. Our professional people and our patients are indeed in peril.

#### SENIORS WILL NOT BE SCARED BY PARTISAN RHETORIC

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, after years of rhetoric and empty promises on improving health care, on June 1 seniors will finally be able to save money on their prescription drugs by choosing a drug discount card that best suits them. This is only possible because the Republican Congress and President Bush passed bipartisan legislation that modernizes Medicare and provided a real prescription drug benefit that means immediate savings for seniors across the Nation.

While some Members are engaging in partisan scare tactics in an election year, they cannot stop seniors from